



4th CERD research conference

‘Shaping the next generation – the experience
of being a student mentor’

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Practicalities...

- Small scale piece of qualitative research funded by the Social Policy & Social Work subject centre, HEA
- Undertaken by a small team of academics from the University of Lincoln School of Health & Social Care from September 2010 – June 2011
- The research used existing links with a project called JUMP run by CfBT Education Trust and funded by Lincolnshire County Council.
- JUMP annually recruit volunteer student mentors from the University of Lincoln and Bishop Grosseteste University College to work on a one to one basis with children looked after by the local authority (LAC).
- The research focussed on two JUMP projects; JUMP for Success (10 week programme) & JUMP Free (weekend residential)

Background Literature

- Looked after children fare badly within education (HM Government, 2005; DCSF, 2009) and have usually experienced adversity prior to admission to care (Morgan, 2010)
- Mentoring known to develop educational and vocational skills (Campbell and Campbell, 2007)
- Mentoring endorsed by Government policy, particularly for social excluded and marginalised young people (Philip et al, 2004; Rainer et al, 2008)

Background Literature

- Political context of Big Society (Cabinet Office, 2010) and 'Giving' white paper (HM Government, 2011)
- Students as producers (Healey and Jenkins, 2009; Neary, 2009; Taylor and Wilding, 2009)
- Lack of research about mentoring using e-technology (Rainer et, 2008)



Background Literature – benefits to mentors

- Benefits to mentors – relating theory to practice; citizenship; professional values; social awareness; job satisfaction; increased remuneration; enhanced career pathways (Schmidt et al, 2004; Philip and Spratt, 2007; Kafai et al, 2008; Boon, 1998; Allen et al, 2006; Liu et al, 2009)
- ‘Stepping stone’ into (professional) employment or training (Philip and Spratt, 2007: 60) – employability; sustainable workforce

Research Questions

- What reasons do students give for engaging with mentoring?
- What do students gain from the mentoring experience, particularly in relation to integrating theory to practice, developing social capital and citizenship?
- How does the mentoring experience equip students for professional practice, including the development of professional identity and a professional value base?
- What challenges do students face in the mentoring processes and what are their perceptions of how these might be alleviated?

The research project

Established a project advisory group which included representation from a range of stakeholders including:

- Student mentors
- Head of Student Support, Bishop Grosseteste University College
- Project Manager, JUMP mentoring project
- ULSU Community Volunteers Manager.

Data collection:

- Focus groups with student mentors from Jump Free and Jump for Success prior to the start & at the completion of the project
- Stakeholder interviews
- Returning student interview
- Blogs
- Case studies
- Products from the evaluation day e.g. Vodcasts; 'visual objects' (Bryman, 2008: 518)

Data Analysis – Nvivo 8

- Project on the school's 'shared' area to facilitate independent checking (de Wet and Erasmus, 2005)
- Managing 'the 1000 page question' (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009: 189)
- Enhance 'trustworthiness' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and transparency (Wickham and Woods, 2005)

Emerging trends and messages from this research

Reasons for engaging with mentoring

- New experiences
- Employability – inform future career and enhance CV
- To help others
- Sustain JUMP
- Previous experience
- To learn and support studies
- Self esteem

and we don't get the opportunity to have placements and things like that, so it is .. it is quite good for experience as well as putting it on the CV for getting a job in that area when you are maybe competing with people..

.. to you think that you have helped you know .. and you see that they are .. are enjoying themselves .. and you can really see a change ..

I wanted to learn about .. the foster care system .. I have always wanted to foster..

Challenges of mentoring

- The children's needs, presentation or behaviours
- Establishing trust and relationships, including concern regarding 'endings' (set in the context of discontinuity of care)
- Managing commitments
- Level of responsibility
- Self doubt: uncertainty about own skills and ability to act as a role model and make relationships with others
- Lack of information about the project

And also it is the attachment things isn't it .. if they get too attached .. and you are conscious .. that is a big worry before .. because like never having done it .. and you are not sure how needy they are going to be .. or what you can do .. because I had never .. worked with children really like that..

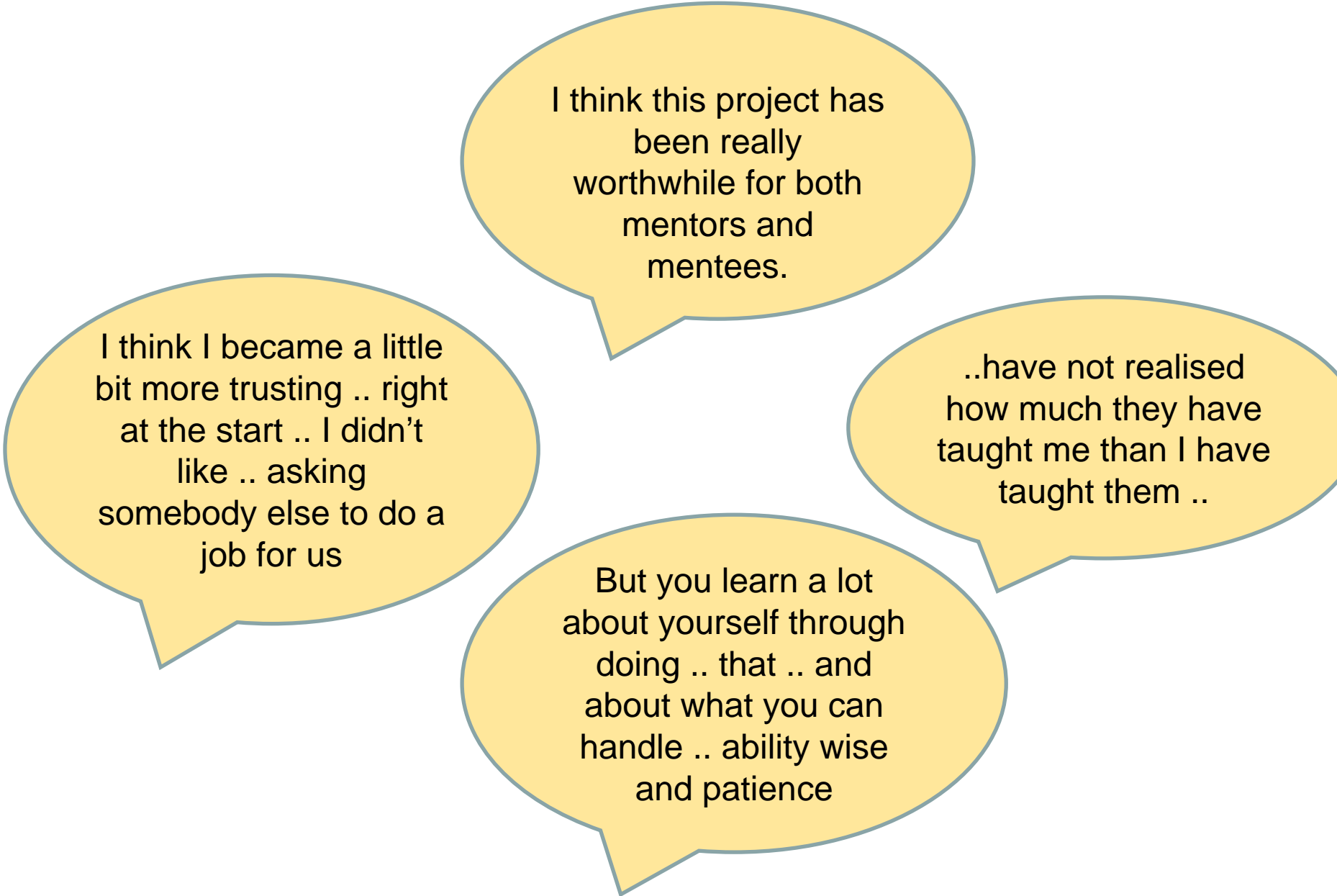
.. I was just wondering .. how challenging the kids were going to be .. because obviously kids in care have got quite a lot going on

..is my competence good enough .. its about my competence..

My main concern were having time off .. from work .. because I .. well I pretty much work full-time as well as going to Uni .. so having time away from Uni .

Gains from mentoring

- Social capital
- Citizenship, including dispelling myths about looked after children
- Development of qualities and skills
- Fun and enjoyment
- Supported studies – provided a placement opportunity
- Shaped future career – confirm or disconfirm



I think this project has
been really
worthwhile for both
mentors and
mentees.

I think I became a little
bit more trusting .. right
at the start .. I didn't
like .. asking
somebody else to do a
job for us

..have not realised
how much they have
taught me than I have
taught them ..

But you learn a lot
about yourself through
doing .. that .. and
about what you can
handle .. ability wise
and patience

I was really definite about going into teaching .. and it has sort of .. from doing this .. it has sort of set me off course a little bit ..

the spirits were high .. and everyone was pulling in together .. because if somebody had been .. like “Oh can’t be bothered” it would have just dragged us all down .. and we weren’t .. we just worked as a team .. really

.. I did have .. maybe preconceived ideas about the children as in .. their behaviour .. and things like that .. and I did honestly thought that they would be a lot worse .. than they were and I was quite surprised ..

and it has opened my eyes to how amazing and inspiring working with young people can be.



JUMP

Please record, using words or pictures, your thoughts about your experience of JUMP this year.

JUMP has been fantastic. JUMP
Free and JUMP 4 Success allow you
to 'escape' from the pressures of uni.
Can't wait until the next JUMP 😊



JUMP

Please record, using words or pictures, your thoughts about your experience of JUMP this year.

Great fun!

brilliant!

lots of laughing!



Good food!

loads of learning!



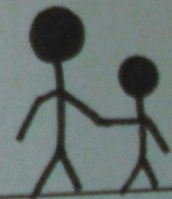
JUMP

Please record, using words or pictures, your thoughts about your experience of JUMP this year.

Jump 4 Success!



- Lovely Staff
- Great Sense of achievement
- Wealth of experience
- Lovely children



Preparation for Professional Practice

- 'Toe dipping'
- Checking if they could work in this area
- Another service user group or age range
- Confirming/disconfirm career choice or future aspirations
- Learning: enhanced understanding of the needs of LAC or specific skills (e.g. behaviour management), practice skills (although the depth of this learning may differ in undergraduate and postgraduate students)
- Supplements professional courses or provides experience for students on non vocational courses

I had one of those sorts of ..
you know .. moments .. and
you know .. you are always
talking about working at the
pace of the service user .. and I
was right off down there .. and
it was “come on keep up with
me” .. and off course that does
not work ..

and if I wanted to become
a social worker .. for
children in care ...I would
understand the
importance of things like
this more and .. and the
value of extra support .

it is learning how to .. how to drop
the teacher role like I said before
and you know finding different ways
.. because I went straight from a
session at the school to the
weekend .. and like .. drove straight
there .. and it was seeing the
difference and realising that I can
relate the two ..

I think that now .. I
know that I want to
work with children

Vodcast

Will be available later

Concluding comments and questions for future research

- The need to consider whether volunteering activity could be usefully incorporated into the core curriculum particularly for professional programmes (at undergraduate or postgraduate levels);
- Using this research to inform and encourage future student mentors;
- Does the ability to develop insight, learning and meaningful reflections from volunteering activity differ in undergraduate and postgraduate students?
- How far does volunteering activity 'add value' to learning in HE with regard to future employability?

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